Has anyone ever asked you: What is your favorite bird? Of course that is a tough question because you have many favorites. Me too, however, in post-Thanksgiving and pre-Christmas ruminations, I am now making a case for the Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). Consider: 320 million domestic turkeys are reared in the USA every year for Thanksgiving celebrations, and 13 million are reared in the UK every year for Christmas dinners. Turkeys are part of our Native American heritage. Discoveries of pen structure, egg shells, and bones of juvenile Mexican turkeys in late Preclassic deposits suggest that domestication and Mesoamerican turkey husbandry date back to 300 BC–100 AD. Spanish explorers took Mexican wild turkeys, domesticated by the Aztecs, home to Europe in about 1519, i.e., about the time Cortez conquered the Aztecs in Mexico. The bird spread across Europe in the early-to-mid-16th century from Spain to France to Britain. Arguably, it acquired its name "turkey bird" from merchants who traded the bird out of "the Levant" in the Turkish empire. Once established, the turkey became a prized centerpiece at feasts for the well-to-do, and was immortalized by Dickens in his *Christmas Carol*. Ironically, colonists who left England to settle the "New World" brought their farmyard bird back to the land of its origin, and were surprised to find Wild Turkeys already here, an abundant food source of American Indians. Hunting Wild Turkeys with bow and arrow, and feasting on their delicious servings garnered well-deserved respect for this magnificent, athletic bird which could outrun a galloping horse at speeds up to 25 mph, and could fly a mile at speeds approaching 55 mph. Out of respect, the indigenous Muscogee Creek and Wampanoag people invested the essence of this bird in their tribal rituals and dances by wearing elegant turkey feather cloaks, and headdresses. While it is not a compliment to be called a turkey, this large gallinaceous bird is one to be admired. Males or "toms" weigh 11-24 lbs, achieve lengths of 39-49 inches, and grow long, stately beards of coarse, hair-like feathers that hang up to 9 inches from the center of their breast. Smaller females ("hens") weigh 5.5 to 11.9 lbs, and grow to lengths of 30-37 inches. Pouls being precocial and nidifugous, leave their nests to begin foraging within 24 hours of hatching. Toms are polygamous, and famous for elaborate, showy courtship behavior which begins in March and April. They entice females of the flock by strutting, i.e., puffing out their bronzy, iridescent body feathers, fanning their tail feathers, dragging their wings, and showing off unusual birdlike junk, i.e., their bald, patriotic, red, white and blue heads, snood, and wattles which routinely change color intensity to emphasize their mood. They punctuate such displays with
intermittent vocalizations that include gobbling, drumming, booming and spitting. Unwittingly, such behavior inspired Shakespeare to reference it in a comic subplot of "Twelfth Night" when he likened the pompous, misguided flirtations of Malvolio toward Olivia to those of a "Turkey cock." Famously, the turkey also inspired Ben Franklin to write his daughter Sarah Bache (Jan 26, 1784) to tell her that the turkey though a little vain and silly is a bird of courage that he would prefer was our national bird. For the record, it is a silly myth that turkeys drown if they point their beaks up in a rain storm. However, it is no myth that by 1940, turkeys were in danger of extinction due to habitat destruction and unrestricted hunting. Population numbers in the U.S. had dropped below 30,000, and in Canada they were almost entirely extirpated. Restocking and relocation of small flocks into suitable habitat by the NWF and Wild Turkey Federation brought the turkey "back from the brink" in one of the great conservation efforts of our time. Over the past 80 years, turkeys have recovered to their present level of 7 million birds in North and Central America. In 1951, at the tender age of 14, I participated in an early restoration effort in upstate NY tracking a small flock of 7 birds, and collecting scat for food intake analysis, i.e., a bottoms-up approach. How could the wild turkey not be my favorite bird?

Happy Trails, Merry Christmas & "Gobble gobble"

Bob Werrlein

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**January Social & Business Meeting**

The next club meeting (Fri., Jan. 6, 2017) launches our new birding year at 6:15 PM with a congenial social gathering around homemade cakes, snacks, soft drinks, and "Hail Good Fellow" exchanges. Following a short business meeting at 7:00 PM, we will be treated to a "Must See" presentation "Birding the Land of Fire and Ice" by Debbie and Don Stewart. The two will take us on a photographic journey to Iceland, sharing their visual experience of its habitat, scenery, and spectacular coastal seabirds and waterfowl. They will make you wish you were there. You might even put Ice-land on your "Bucket List." By all means, invite a friend.

We are always looking for good, new, supportive members to help make our HBC a more effective voice for avian conservation.

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**Harford Bird Club Executive Board**

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<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
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HBC Membership Renewal Notice

Urgent!: Some members have still not paid their dues for the 2016-2017 Membership year. If you have not paid by February 1, your membership will expire, and your name will be removed from both the State (MOS) and local (HBC) list of members. We do not want to lose you! Since the next newsletter will come out after February 1, this is the last notice you will get to remind you not to let your membership lapse. If you have questions about renewal, please contact Eric Vangrin at evangrin@msn.com or 443-417-7219.

2016 Rock Run Christmas Bird Count
The 53rd annual Rock Run Christmas Bird Count will take place on Saturday, December 31st, 2016. This event is centered around Susquehanna State Park and covers a 15-mile circle spreading inland around the lower Susquehanna River and upper bay in both Harford and Cecil Counties. Sponsored by the National Audubon Society, information about the count, its history, previous years’ results and a photo gallery can be found at http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count. The Rock Run CBC is an excellent opportunity for Harford Bird Club members to have fun and build friendships while contributing to one of the largest scientific databases concerning bird populations. At the end of the afternoon, count participants may gather to warm up with good food and tales of the day’s adventures. Whether you are veteran participant or a first-timer, become a citizen scientist and participate in this year’s Rock Run CBC. Register today by e-mailing the HBC Count Coordinator Rick Cheicante at rickcheicante@cs.com.

Harford Youth Birding

HBC Youth Christmas Count
On Saturday, Jan. 7, 2017, Ruth Bergstrom will conduct the 3rd annual Youth Christmas Count at Swan Harbor Farm in Havre de Grace. Each participant, accompanied by an adult, will be part of a small birding team headed by an experienced birder. Each team will record the number and species of birds spotted along a predetermined route during a fixed time period. Results from all teams will be tallied, combined, and presented for entry on eBird at the Swan Harbor Center. Age groups are 4-7 and 8-16 years. Registration required by emailing Ruth Bergstrom at ruthb22@yahoo.com.

2017 Mid-Winter Count

The 2017 Mid-Winter Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, January 28th. The Mid-Winter Count is a bit more flexible than the Christmas Count in that you can bird anywhere you wish in Harford County! Feeder counts are welcome! Contact the coordinator Rick Cheicante at rickcheicante@cs.com to let him know where you will be counting to avoid overlap. Have fun, stay warm ... and good birding!

Bird Droppings

Club News?
Have news the club should know about? Births, deaths, marriages, or any other notable events that belong in the newsletter? Please contact Corresponding Secretary Madeline Lovera at 443-425-3974 or send an email to lovebluebird206@gmail.com.

Welcome!
A warm Harford Bird Club welcome goes out to the following new members. Thank you for joining... we look forward to seeing you out there on our birding trips and at our meetings!

Rick Batttersby of Bel Air
Joel & Phyllis Donnelly of Street
Barbara Meserve of Fallston
Eric Walther of Pylesville
Field Trip Reports

Windmill Hill Farm
October 22
Not even 40-mpg wind gusts could keep nine birders from gathering for the club’s first visit to Windmill Hill Farm near Darlington. The blustery conditions limited our ability to find songbirds, most of whom hunkered down in underbrush. Nonetheless, we were successful in finding both species of kinglets and six species of woodpeckers. Bald Eagles of all ages were seen throughout the morning soaring above. The highlight of the trip was a Common Raven that flew within a hundred yards of us — a county first for several happy birders in the group. Thanks to Peter Jay, a longtime friend of the HBC, for allowing us to visit his Deer Creek Valley property. — Diane Jones & Dave Webb

Harford Waterfowl Tour
November 12
Five early-bird birders gathered at the crack of dawn to search for waterfowl at some of the ponds and tributaries of eastern Harford County, from the Gunpowder to the mighty Susquehanna. The birding was so good however that we actually never made it farther north than Forest Greens Preserve on the Perryman Peninsula. The morning got off to a great start with a basic-plumage Red-throated Loon and a late migrant yellowlegs (too distant to determine species) found just off of Eagle Point on Lauderick Creek. Then we spotted a flock of 6 Wild Turkeys on the edge of the woods approaching Skippers Point. A short while later we discovered a juvenile Red-headed Woodpecker near the south end of Hoadley Road. But wait — wasn't this billed as a waterfowl tour? Yes, and we did find a smattering of ducks at APG South such as Ruddy Duck, Hooded Merganser and Bufflehead. Certainly the waterfowl numbers were low for this traditional hotspot, but no one was disappointed given what we had seen instead. Things finally picked up at our final two stops, the "Home Depot Pond" just northeast of Edgewood and then Forest Greens. At the former locale, we picked up Ring-necked Duck, Green-winged Teal, and Gadwall; while at the latter stop we added Wood Duck, American Wigeon and Northern Shoveler. All in all, a great morning of birding, with 54 species including 13 waterfowl. — Dave Webb and John Rinker

Turkey Trek at Eden Mill
November 19
Ten birders enjoyed a beautiful walk around the historic Eden Mill property, where we saw or heard most of the usual species, though no Wild Turkeys. While searching in upper fields we were treated to a quick-flying Merlin which flew close enough for identification. We also enjoyed a Bald Eagle and Red-tailed Hawk, as well as an active Eastern Phoebe. A quietly calling Hermit Thrush allowed shaded views, but a sweetly singing though shy Fox Sparrow moved too quickly for the group to see. An Eastern Towhee called and appeared briefly. Not surprisingly, the most numerous species was the White-throated Sparrow, though possibly surpassed by a flock of Common Grackles flying over on its daily commute. — Susan Hood

Do You Know What This Is?? It's the AT&T Bill!!

Conrad grew to resent the four calling birds his true love gave to him.
Harford Bird Club Field Trips

Field trip schedule compiled by Tom Gibson

Dec. 31 (Sat.) - Christmas Count - Contact the compiler, Rick Cheicante (410-803-2712; rickcheicante@cs.com), for details.

Jan. 1 (Sun.) – Perryman Area – Celebrate the New Year/recovery from New Year’s Eve with a walk through the always productive Perryman area with leader Phil Powers (410-679-4116; birdsinmd@verizon.net). Meet at the Aberdeen Wal-Mart parking lot off Rt. 40 at 8:30 AM.

Jan. 14 (Sat.) – Feeder Tour – Join our annual feeder tour to visit the private homes of a few of our members to survey avian visitors at their bird feeders and to get some new ideas for attracting a variety of birds to your yard. Light refreshments will be served. Join us for winter birthing from a cozy and warm spot with good friends. Final details to follow via email and the club website.

Jan. 21 (Sat.) – Conowingo Eagle Watch – Meet at 8:00 AM at Fisherman’s Park below the dam. Bring your camera for a chance at many excellent shots of large numbers of eagles along with other shorebirds and waterfowl. The leader is Dave Webb (410-939-3537; porzana@comcast.net).

January 28 (Sat.) - Midwinter Bird Count. Contact the compiler, Rick Cheicante (410-803-2712; rickcheicante@cs.com) for details.

February 4 (Sat.) - World Famous Bradenbaugh Flats/Soup Event – Meet at the Jarretsville Elementary School parking lot at 8:00 AM. Dennis Kirkwood leads us on a pleasant tour through NW Harford County’s agricultural area to find wintering field birds and waterfowl. Expect Horned Larks, longspurs and Snow Buntings, Ring-necked Ducks, and maybe a Cackling goose. The trip ends at the leader’s house where you can warm up and enjoy hot soup, breads and good conversation and maybe even a brief glimpse of the resident screech owl. Contact Dennis at (newarkfarms@gmail.com; 410-692-5905).

February 11 (Sat.) - Cape May/Lewes Ferry - Journey to southern New Jersey in search of winter residents and strays. Possible targets include Eurasian Wigeon, Orange-crowned Warbler, Harlequin Duck, both Common and King Eiders, Great Cormorant, and many others along the Delaware Bay and Cape May coastlines. In the afternoon we will take the 2:30 PM run of the Cape May - Lewes Ferry where all three scoters can be expected in addition to Northern Gannet, Common and Red-throated Loons, and a shot at possible other pelagic birds as well. The birding trip is free but the ferry charges $27 for car and driver plus $8 per additional adult ($51 for a car full of four adults). Contact Russ Kovach for more information (russell.kovach@gmail.com; 443-386-4787). Meet at the Havre de Grace Park & Ride at 155/I 95 at 6:00 AM.

February 25 (Sat.) – Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge – Meet at the Havre de Grace Park and Ride (I-95/Rt. 155) at 8:00 AM. Expect to see ducks, swans, waterfowl and maybe pelicans. Leaders are veteran birders Mark Johnson (marksjohnson@gmail.com; 410-692-5978) and Tom Congersky (410-658-4137; jnjtcon@zoominternet.net).

March 5 (Sun.) - Swan Harbor Farm Park - This Harford County gem with three impoundments, a commanding view of the Chesapeake Bay, wooded trails, and open fields has developed into a fine location for a broad spectrum of bird life, including waterfowl, marsh species, raptors and sparrows. Meet at 7:15 AM at the parking lot adjacent to the Agricultural Education Center at the end of the driveway. Leaders are Dave Webb (porzana@comcast.net; 410-939-3537) and Josh Emm (410-937-6790; apisto-panchax@gmail.com).

March 8 (Wed.) - Timberdoodle Search – Join this evening watch for one of our most interesting (and elusive) birds, the American Woodcock, as it performs its spring mating sky dance. Meet promptly at 6:00 PM at the gate to Harford Glen (the gate will be open for only a few minutes), located at the end of W Wheel Road (502 W. Wheel Rd.). The leaders are Dave Larkin (410-509-8319; larkin3001@comcast.net), Amanda Koss (443-528-4306; amanda-koss01@hotmail.com) and Jane Scocca (410-272-8870; jane@scocca.org).

March 15 (Wed.) - Timberdoodle Search – Join us this evening at 7:00 PM at the Edgewood Home Depot parking lot on the west side at a location that has produced fascinating American Woodcock activity as darkness begins to descend. Our leaders will be Tim Houghton (timhoughton@comcast.net; 410-510-7504) and Elaine Beery(410-272-6037; ehebeery@yahoo.com).

April 1 (Sat.) – Lapidum - Look for gulls, lingering waterfowl and perhaps some early surprises. Additional sites in Susquehanna State Park may be visited. Meet at the Lapidum parking lot at the south end of Susquehanna State Park at 7:30 AM. Leaders are Dennis Kirkwood (410-692-5905; newarkfarms@gmail.com) and Matt Addicks.
Geese, Ducks, Grebes, Raptors
DK had up to 4 Cackling Geese on Turney’s Pond in northern Harford County starting on Oct 15th. They were seen sporadically throughout the period. JE found a Surf Scoter on the Susquehanna River on Nov 6th. CW had her first-of-year (FOY) Pied-billed Grebe on the bay on Nov 15th and her FOY Bufflehead there on Nov 28th. JE saw 3 Ruddy Ducks at Tydings Marina in Havre de Grace on Oct 2nd. AC saw a Horned Grebe at Lakeside Business Park on Nov 7th.

MAF spotted 6 Cattle Egrets flying over Perryman Park on Oct 25th. LKH saw 2 in Jarrettsville on Oct 28th. DK noted her leucistic Turkey Vulture flying over Harford Glen on Oct 11th. DB saw a Bald Eagle fighting to remain perched in a windstorm near Holy Cross Road on Nov 20th. She had not seen one here in the past. CW saw 3 Bald Eagle pairs flying their courtship maneuvers near the Rt 40 entrance to Bulle Rock on Nov 20th. DL saw a Golden Eagle at Perryman Park on Nov 15th. RE saw a Broad-winged Hawk over Harford Glen on Nov 22nd.

Cranes, Plovers, Sandpipers, Terns, Owls, Ravens
BP saw 6 Sandhill Cranes flying toward the southeast over Edgewood on Nov 24th. JE found a Black-bellied Plover, a Ruddy Turnstone, and a Royal Tern on the Susquehanna Flats on Oct 2nd. He also saw a Black-bellied Plover, a Spotted Sandpiper, 2 Semipalmated Sandpipers, and a White-rumped Sandpiper on North Sand Island on Oct 13th. He counted 8 White-rumped Sandpipers on Battery Island on Oct 11th. He reported a Red Phalarope off Tydings Marina on Oct 23rd. DK announced that an Eastern Screech-Owl had taken up residence in a Wood Duck box on the pond near his home on Newark Farms on Nov 29th. This was the fifth year he has seen a Screech-Owl there. DB heard a calling Great Horned Owl near her home in Street on Nov 28th. RK saw a Common Raven in Darlington on Nov 7th.

Chickadees, Nuthatches, Warblers, Sparrows
DK reported that the Harford Glen banding station caught and banded 2 Black-capped Chickadees on Nov 15th. JE saw up to 4 at Swan Harbor between Nov 19th and Nov 23rd. AR also saw one at Tydings Park on Nov 27th. SH had up to 4 Red-breasted Nuthatches at her home in Fallston throughout the reporting period. They were vocal and energetic much of the time. MJ found an Orange-crowned Warbler at Swan Harbor on Oct 16th. JE saw one there on Nov 19th and 20th. TH found 2 Nashville, 1 Tennessee, 1 Cape May, 6 Yellow-rumped, 11 Palm (2 Western and 9 Yellow), and 2 Blackpoll Warblers at Perryman Park on Oct 17th. RLF found a Black-throated Gray Warbler near the Havre de Grace waterfront on Nov 26th. The bird stayed in the area through the end of the month, allowing many people to see and photograph it.

MJ saw a Connecticut Warbler at Lakeside on Oct 2nd. DL saw one at Perryman Park on Oct 13th. JG also saw one there on Oct 19th. TH had a Vesper Sparrow there in Oct 20th. DK found a Lincoln’s Sparrow at the Harford Glen banding station on Oct 11th. TH saw one at Swan Harbor on Oct 17th. DL saw a Dickcissel at Perryman Park on Oct 13th. JG saw one there on Oct 19th.

Contributors
### Support Our Sponsors

The following businesses generously donated prizes for the raffle at the last meeting. Please patronize them and thank them for their support of the club.

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<td>John and Linda Ireland, Owners</td>
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### Webmaster Job Announcement

Dick Harple (after many years of dependable and much appreciated service) now lives in Pennsylvania, and has decided to retire from his post as our HBC webmaster. Accordingly, we must now search for a skilled and capable replacement to maintain, monitor and refresh our existing website. There is some urgency to this search for a suitable candidate because Dick is 80 years young, and would like to relinquish his position as soon as possible in order to garner some well-deserved down time. Ideally, we are looking for a candidate who has a working knowledge of various programming languages such as HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language), Javascript, PHP, Apache, CSS or others, as would be necessary to assure that the existing website stays on-line, functions without flaws, and provides our members with a rich, user-friendly experience. Knowing design software such as Adobe, Photoshop, Macromedia Flash, or AJAX would also be helpful for use in website design, graphics, and content management. The webmaster should expect to work on his/her own, and to interact as part of a team in a small web environment. To this end, good interpersonal relationships and communication skills are essential. While the specifics of this job description are not yet fully developed, the immediate intent is to find a qualified and interested person with creative and artistic skills who would enjoy helping us to build and maintain an attractive and appealing website. If you are that person, or know who that person should be, please contact Les Eastman (<les@birdtreks.com>), and/or Bob Werrlein (we2.rein@gmail.com) for additional details. Together, we will develop the foundation for a seamless webmaster transition.

### Guess That Bird Contest

As 2016 draws to a close, many birders begin to reflect on the unique birding experiences of the past year. For some, it is a new backyard bird or finding a new breeding bird for their property. I was thrilled to discover a pair of Virginia Rails apparently on territory on my farm this past May. Others start counting and reviewing their lists, which always bring good memories from special trips or chases more local. Photographers sort through hundreds or thousands of pictures to find the right one for a holiday card or to frame for a gift.

2016 was a great year for new Harford County birds. Sharp eyes found first records of Tufted Duck in March, Ruff in July, and Black-throated Gray Warbler just recently in November. Other fascinating repeats but especially rare included Long-billed Dowitcher, Willet, Long-eared Owl, Mississippi Kite, Tricolored Heron, Baird’s Sandpiper, American White Pelican, and Red Phalarope. Some persisted to give many Harford and other State birders a chance to see something unusual.

As 2017 approaches, many birders are planning trips to exotic and domestic locations to see something different and interesting. For those staying local, what surprises will the new year bring? Let’s put our collective minds together and prognosticate. Here’s your chase to predict the future and speculate on what new birds will show up in Harford County in 2017. Send me up to 3 species you think are overdue to make a local appearance. Thumb through your field guides and consult the MOS Yellow book if you have one and make your best guesses. I will compile the predictions and share them in a future newsletter and at a future meeting.

We have no prize to offer other than bragging rights but it will be very interesting to see what shows up if we spread the welcome map. You can send your choices to Dennis Kirkwood at newarkfarms@gmail.com or give him a call at 410-692-5905. Don’t be afraid to dream big! Gryfalcon anyone?
Harford Bird Club
January Meeting

"Birding the Land of Fire and Ice"
by
Debbie and Don Stewart

Friday, Jan. 6th, 2017
Social Gathering 6:15, Snacks, Cakes, Soft Drinks, and Camaraderie
Business Meeting 7:00 PM
Bring a friend
(if Harford County schools are closed for the day, or close early due to weather, the meeting will be postponed until Fri. 20 Jan.)
Location: Churchville Presbyterian Church
2844 Churchville Road
Churchville, MD 21028

Visit us on the web:
www.harfordbirdclub.org

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Apt. 3507
Parkville, MD. 21234

Mail To: